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Australian Reports Spying on Japan

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CANBERRA, Australia — The private secretary to former prime minister Gough Whitlam said in a book published yesterday that Australia for many years had spied on Japan for economic secrets.

Richard Hall, a journalist and one-time private secretary to the Labor Party prime minister, said four Australian intelligence agencies were involved. They were helped by their U.S. and British counterparts.

"The objective of the espionage operations has been the collection of economic intelligence about our major trading partner," he said in his book "The Secret State," which is highly critical of intelligence-gathering activities.

"With a decline in the cold war atmosphere, tasks have to be found so that the espionage bureaucracy can be kept at work," he said. He questioned whether information gathered by spying added anything to what could be gleaned through normal channels.